Trip Report from St. Louis .NET Training August 8 and 9, 2001

Prepared by Ken Spencer @ 32X Tech

Marnie Hutchinson and Ken Spencer presented the first .NET Development Tour training in St. Louis, MO from 32X Tech.

The training was delivered to approximately 250 to 300 people at the Adman's Mark hotel in downtown St Louis. Both days started on time at 8:30am and ran until approximately 5:15pm.

The onsite coordinator was Tamara and she did an excellent job.

There were a couple of problems during this first show, but overall the show went extremely well with minor inconveniences to the attendees.

The major problems were:

- Approximately ½ of the workbooks were not delivered until mid morning of the first day. The trainers did not know the workbooks were even in the area nor did the onsite coordinator. The workbooks were distributed to the students who did not have them during the show in late morning and it was distracting to say the least not to mention unprofessional. We made light of it and continued on.
- The audio / video (A/V) equipment was sub-par in the opinion of the instructors and many in the audience. The video was fuzzy even after an hour of setup and tweaking before the show (even up close). We had to bump up the fonts so large on our display systems that some VS .NET dialogs did not even fit on the screen and the text in the toolbox and other places was so large it made working with things harder. This was required to get an acceptable display for attendees and even then it was sub par.

  The video system used only one large screen. For an audience of 200+, two screens are much better. With only one screen, the seats on each side front to back had a poor view. Not only can the attendee's see better, but also the instructors can be in the center of the room and thus talk easier to all people.

  During the show one of the microphones went dead the first morning (the receiver was bad) and there was no backup. It took the AV techs a good bit of time (an hour or so) to get a new receiver, so one of the instructors (Ken) had to basically yell to be heard for an hour..

  When the show started there was no backup projector. We were told they were brining one in later in the day but I did not see one. If you lose a projector during a show and have no backup, the show is pretty much toast, as it usually takes at least an

hour to get one and sync it in and that's if the projector is close by.

- The attendees completed the evaluation forms at lunch during the second day. The attendees rushed to get them done and pick up their bags and the onsite coordinator needed to get them done early to ship them out at the end of the show. Thus, the evaluations were filled in when there was 25% (4 hours) left in the show. As a result, the evaluations were filled in when 2 of the worst modules (1 and 3 with marketing issues) were delivered and before many of the best modules were delivered.
- We did not do live demos to either upload an app with one click hosting or to access alive web service. During out testing before the show we had repeated errors with these functions on all of the demo machines. We went through the process so the audience saw what was involved, we just did not pull the trigger and go live. Just going through the steps got the message across. Make sure you test any live Internet demos right before you do them with the equipment in the room.

We at 32X Tech and the onsite coordinator received a good deal of feedback during the show. The following points summarize comments we received:

- Modules 1 (What is .NET) and 3 (Visual Studio .NET) have too much marketing. See suggestions below. Because first impressions were so important, any impressions of what Marnie did should be tempered by the fact that she took the licks for delivering a highly marketing message in modules 1 and 3. Most of the audience knew what .NET is and that's why they were there.
- Modules 14 (Interop) and 15 (Migrating applications) were well received and counterbalanced modules 1 and 3. Modules 14 and 15 made developers feel good and that what they have been doing is not going away.
- A number of people we talked to were overwhelmed. Some were totally out of their league and even some savvy developers were awed by what they saw.
- A number of people (say 10 to 15) were very enthusiastic to the instructors and pleased with the show. Overall, the crowd seemed to be very enthusiastic.
- There were a wide variety of developers in the audience. The majority were VB / ASP developers. There was a pretty even split between windows and web developers. There were a small

number of C++ developers and about the same number of Java developers. About 15% of the audience (by a show of hands) was interested in C# while the rest were interested in VB .NET. Approximately 540% of the audience had some experience building components. There were a good number of questions on C++ from a few people.

- A large number of people indicated they were using certificates for web security.

Recommendations to be implemented immediately:

- Skip Module 1 in its entirety. When you start the show, mention the module is there for background info and be done with it. Dive right into Module 2 on the framework and talk about it practically. Do the Northwind Traders Travel demo in Module 2 to start things off then relate back to the application during the entire module when talking about the .NET Framework. Show code in the fractals example and explain how the threading support comes from the framework.
- Skip the slides in Module 3 on Visual Studio and deliver the entire presentation from the interface showing various VS .NET features. Point out the module and tell the audience the slides are for reference. Fire up VS .NET and go through its paces. Also point out tricks such as how to set keyboard layout, how to dock windows so they are tabbed and so forth. Also talk about the migration wizard and run it, just don't go into detail about what it does – save that for module 15. Also talk about COM InterOp and how VS .NET does the work for you. Get them excited right here about leveraging their VB skills with .NET and continuing to use their COM components. For other input on modules 1 and 3, talk to Billy Hollis. In talking with Billy, he concurs with me on the way these modules should be covered based upon our experience at 4 Train the Trainer sessions and in St. Louis.
- Add some info about using certificates for authentication in the security module. Spencer will check on this.
- Spend more time in code since you skip the hype in module 1 and 3. We may add a few more demos in certain areas or we could spend more time showing C# demos in certain areas along with VB .NET. We can also use more time talking about issues.
- On the second day, we started the day by running the video of the Donkey.NET demo from TechEd. We started this at 8:25 and

it was the perfect lead in to the Windows module. We did an adhoc demo that day to show how the windowless non-rectangular form was created in Donkey.NET. This got great response from the audience.

- Hand out the evaluation forms on the last day at break or at the start of the last module. Collect them as people leave. For those that leave early, have them fill them out as they leave. We found out a long time ago that it was vital for the instructors to see the evaluations as soon as the show was done. Only one of us had a cursory look at part of them and we cannot make adjustments quickly because we did not see all of them.
- In prepping for the Mobile Web App demo, beware that having two machines with wireless cards live at the same time may cause problems. Test this when you arrive, then make sure you test this demo at lunch or break on the 2nd day to make sure your connections are still working between the CE and the laptop.

We are adjusting our delivery based on these issues immediately and are going to update a couple of demos that need slight tweaking.

Ken Spencer at 32X Tech on 8/10/01 prepared this report.